CLAIMS

1.   A method of rendering content of an email as speech, comprising the steps of:

inserting a tag into the email, wherein said tag separates a first content in said email provided by a first source from a second content in said email provided by a second source;

transmitting said email to a system for rendering said email as speech wherein said

5   system supports two or more different voice modes,

detecting said tag, and

wherein when said email is rendered as speech, said first content is rendered in a first voice mode and wherein said second content is rendered in a second voice mode, with the second voice mode being different from the first voice mode.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein said first content comprises an original email message and wherein said second content comprises a reply email message to said original email message.

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3.   The method of claim 1, wherein said step of inserting a tag into the email is performed by an email client application.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein said step of inserting a tag into the email is performed by

10   an email server.

5.   A method of rendering an email message as speech, comprising the steps of:

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processing said email message to identify an original email message and a reply message to said original email message;

15   rendering said original email message as speech in a first voice mode;

rendering said reply message as speech in a second voice mode, said second voice mode being different from said first voice mode.

6.   The method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of processing said email message to identify content from a third source, and wherein said content from said third source is rendered in a third voice mode different from said first and second voice modes.

7.   The method of claim 6, wherein said first voice mode is different from said second voice mode in at least one of the following speech attributes: sex of speaker, accent, intonation, speech rate, and pitch.

8.   The method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of (1) processing said email message to detect at least one of the following: a) a signature block to either said original email message or said reply message, b) a privacy notice, or c) a confidentiality notice; and (2) not rendering at least one of said detected signature block, confidentiality notice or privacy notice as speech.

9.   The method of claim 5, wherein said reply message comprises a voice memo in response to a specific portion of said original email message, and wherein the method further comprises

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the step of processing said email message to detect a tag associated with said voice memo, and responsively rendering said voice memo as speech.

10.   The method of claim 9, wherein said tag comprises a pointer to an object comprising said voice memo.

11.   A method of rendering an email message as speech, comprising the steps of:

processing said email message to identify a signature block in said email message;

rendering said email content as speech; and

not rendering said signature block as speech.

12.   A method of rendering an email message as speech, comprising the steps of:

processing said email message to identify a privacy notice in said email message;

rendering said email content as speech; and

not rendering said privacy notice as speech.

13.   A method of rendering an email message as speech, comprising the steps of:

processing said email message to identify a confidentiality notice in said email message;

rendering said email content as speech; and

not rendering said confidentiality notice as speech.

14.   A method of rendering an email message as speech to a recipient of said email message, comprising the steps of:

        processing said email message to identify email content and a signature block;

        rendering said email content as speech;

        referring to a user profile to determine whether to render the signature block as speech;

        rendering, or not rendering, said signature block as speech in accordance with said user profile.

15.   A method of rendering an email message as speech to a recipient of said email message, comprising the steps of:

        processing said email message to identify email content and a signature block;

        rendering said email content as speech;

        detecting a tag separating a signature block from the reset of the email content

        prompting a user to indicate whether to render the signature block as speech;

        rendering, or not rendering, said signature block as speech in accordance with the response to said prompt.

15.   In an email server, the improvement comprising:

        a machine readable storage medium containing a set of instructions for parsing an email to detect email content and a signature block associated with said email content;

        wherein said instructions include instructions inserting a tag in said email message that separates said email content from said signature block.

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16. In an email server, the improvement comprising:

a machine readable storage medium containing a set of instructions for parsing an email to detect email content from a first source and email content from a second source;

wherein said instructions include instructions inserting a tag in said email message that separates said email content from said first source from said email content from said second source.

17. In an email server, the improvement comprising:

a machine readable storage medium containing a set of instructions for parsing an email to detect email content and at least one of a privacy notice and a confidentiality notice associated with said email content;

wherein said instructions include instructions inserting a tag in said email message that separates said email content from said privacy notice and/or confidentiality notice.

18. A method of allowing a recipient of an email message from a source to respond to said email message via voice, comprising the steps of:

rendering said email message to said recipient as speech;

as said email is being rendered as speech, receiving a signal from said recipient indicating

5   the recipient intends to respond to said email message by inserting a voice memo at a particular location in said email message;

receiving and storing said voice memo from said recipient; and

rendering said voice memo as speech to said source.

19.   The method of claim 18, wherein said signal comprises a DTMF tone.

20.   The method of claim 18, wherein said signal comprises a voice command.

21.   The method of claim 18, wherein said voice memo is stored with a hyperlink that points to a storage location containing said voice memo.

22.   The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of rendering said voice memo as speech to said recipient and prompting said recipient to indicate whether to change said voice memo.

23.   The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of prompting said recipient to indicate whether to continue with the rendering of said email as speech after receiving said voice memo.

24.   The method of claim 1, wherein said second content comprises a voice response.

25.   The method of claim 1, wherein said second content comprises a text response.

26.   The method of claim 24, wherein said email further comprises a third content provided by a third source, wherein said third content comprises a text response.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said second content and said third content are rendered as speech, with said second content and said third content are rendered as speech in second and third distinct voice modes, respectively, each distinct from said first voice mode.

28. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of receiving a command from a user listening to said email, said command comprising a navigational command to control the rendering of the email as speech.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein said command request rendering a desired portion of said email.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein said command comprises a voice command.

31. The method of claim 29, wherein said desired portion comprises email content from a source indicated in the command.

32. The method of claim 28, wherein said command comprises a command to cease rendering of the email as speech.